THE EAT WELL DINNER BOOK

Lessons in tasting and eating for the young child

The very best book to help you learn to enjoy your food
THE EAT•WELL•DINNER BOOK

Lessons in tasting and eating for the young child

Vivienne van Eijkelenborg
Monique Thomas-Holtus
Inge Nouws
DEAR READER,

You are looking at the "Eat Well Dinner Book, Lessons in tasting and eating for the young child", written by Monique Thomas-Holtus in collaboration with Difrax. This book is intended to be a practical guide for parents and children, especially for those children who often do not feel like eating or who are very fussy eaters. We think this is a lovely book and we are sure that you will too, and that it will help you to teach your child to enjoy food. As you have picked up this book, either you know you have a problem or you are having to deal with this issue for some other reason. We are sure you will find it a great book, because there is simply no other book on the market that describes, in such a clear, simple, practical and yet entertaining way, how to do something about the problem of children who do not want to eat. As a person who is already interested in this, you will know that it is not a trivial problem – eating in the company of other people is very important in our culture. Not only are the children affected, but the adults around them are driven to despair by it, often cannot see a way out and the problems just seem to get worse. Yes, there are serious articles and books available for professionals about children with longstanding problems with eating and drinking. But when parents get hold of these and read them, they often end up being even more confused. All they have gained is more frustration – they have looked for help and read about the problem, but have made no progress. Then they turn to this book – it helps parents to recognise what their child’s biggest problem is and how to tackle it. What makes it even nicer is that you can tell that the author uses this approach herself; otherwise, she could never have written about it like this. At the Wilhelmina Children’s Hospital, children with eating problems have been successfully helped for years under the expert and dedicated guidance of Monique Thomas-Holtus. And finally – the Eat Well Dinner Book is an entertaining book that is written from the child’s perspective. Every reason for you to have a go at this tried and tested approach yourself!

We hope you have a lot of fun reading this book and, above all, we wish you the best of luck with teaching your child to enjoy all kinds of food!

YOLANDA MEIJER EN MAARTEN HOEKSTRA
Paediatricians at the Wilhelmina Children’s Hospital, Utrecht

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You want the best for your child and we really want to help you. That’s why Difrax has been selling safe, well-designed products for babies and young children for over 41 years. In the first few years of life, a child takes huge steps forward in his or her development. Children not only learn to sit, stand and walk but also to eat and drink. For some children, this comes naturally. For others, learning to enjoy different foods comes less naturally. This book offers you support, so that learning to eat and enjoy food can be a pleasant experience and a journey of discovery for your child.

Food and drink are the source of our energy. We simply cannot do without them. That’s why we asked eating counsellor Monique Thomas-Holtus to share her vast experience and expertise with us. The book is in two parts – the second part is specially for you and contains background information and tips. The first part is for you and your child to read together. This part aims to make eating something you can talk about and to give an example of a relaxed and cheerful way to approach food that you and your child can adopt. The message of this book is that enjoyment of food is something you can learn, and this message is enthusiastically conveyed by MiMi the food fairy. The book consists of fifteen stories for reading aloud, with the children Kate and Kevin and MiMi the food fairy as the main characters. The stories are about eating and table manners in general, but they also set out a step-by-step taste-something-new game.

The step-by-step taste-something-new game consists of the taste-something-new plan and stickers, so that you can make agreements with your child about what he or she wants to learn to like eating. The ultimate goal is to be crowned as a Food Prince or Food Princess. Difrax has designed a unique dinner set with a special taste-something-new plate and magic cutlery set to be used with the taste-something-new game. The dinner set incorporates attractive light and sound features and pictures that are connected to the stories. The set also contains reward stars for each mouthful and the magic toadstool in which you can conceal your child’s dessert or a surprise. The surprise could be a sticker out of the book or some other reward. (The dinner set can be bought at specialist baby shops or from www.difraxshop.com). Rewards are an important part of this programme. That’s why, as well as the reward stars, stickers and small personal surprise messages, there is a crown for each Food Prince or Food Princess who gets to the end of the step-by-step taste-something-new game.

This book is an aid to help you in the process of teaching your child to eat well. Use the book as a guide, but follow your own intuition and use the material in this book creatively. It is important to use all the elements from the book but to do so at your child’s own pace. You know your child best. So you decide how quickly or slowly to take it, so that learning to eat and learning to enjoy food remains a pleasure!

Dear parent,

I would like to take this opportunity to warmly thank Monique Thomas-Holtus for her fantastic contribution to this book, and for her boundless commitment and enthusiasm for her field! Monique, you have inspired us to make an even better product and I am immensely proud of this beautiful book that we have managed to produce together! Thank you!

As CEO of Difrax and as MiMi the food fairy, I look forward to receiving your comments, experiences and suggestions via the Difrax website. Click on “Contact” and then click on “Tell MiMi the food fairy”.

I wish you and your Food Prince or Princess lots of luck!

Vivienne van Eijkelenborg
MiMi the food fairy
CEO Difrax
www.difrax.com
Hello. My name is MiMi the food fairy, the only real good-eater fairy. I love apple pie and cauliflower; and I love pears and liquorice laces. I love soup and pancakes, and I love chips with green beans. Yes, it’s true I am a real Food fairy and I have something to tell you. I know how you can become a real Food Prince or a real Food Princess. With the Eat Well Dinner Book you can learn it like this. First, with your parents, choose something that you want to learn to like eating and then we are going to practise a lot and you can earn lots of stickers. You can stick your stickers on the taste-something-new plan and when it is full you can send it to MiMi the food fairy, who will give you a beautiful Good-eater Crown as a reward. To practise, you have the cool Take A Bite-Swallow-Gone dinner set which has music and lights. When you have tasted really well, you can look for a surprise in the magic toadstool!

You can’t wait to start? Great! Then we’ll start straight away. Oh yes, before I forget. There is one rule to this taste-something-new game, so don’t forget. You have to taste!
This is Kate and Kate is nearly four. She lives in a nice house with her father and mother and Puss. Kate loves her best friend Kevin and Kate loves chips with sauce and nothing else. Yes, that’s really true! Kate doesn’t like food at all. She only eats chips. Chips with sauce, chips without sauce, chips on a plate, or chips in a carton or in paper from the fish and chip shop. Kate never eats vegetables. “Yuck!” she shouts if there is anything green on her spoon. And she clamps her mouth tightly shut. So her mother keeps making chips for her - crinkly chips, chunky chips and thin French fries. Kate’s mother makes the best chips in the village. On Wednesday she has a treat, because Wednesday is crinkly chip day.

Kevin, Kate’s best friend, likes everything: cauliflower, chicken and fish fingers. Luckily, he likes chips too! Because Kate and Kevin always have dinner together on crinkly chip day. Lovely! The two friends are very alike. Both of them like playing outdoors, both of them like cars and crazy games. But there is one big difference. Kate wants to be a firefighter when she grows up and Kevin wants to be a chef. Not just any chef. No, Kevin wants to be the best chef in the world. Kate does not want to be a chef. Just imagine if you had to taste to see if the beans were cooked! Yuck … thinking about it is bad enough. No, Kate wants to be the best chip-eating firefighter in the world. And that is pretty special!
Mmmm... yummy, a lovely glass of milk.
Do you know where milk comes from?
All the food that you buy in the shops is made from or by something. Some food grows on trees and some food comes from animals. On this page you can see some pictures and photos of different kinds of food.
I wonder if you can point to what an apple grows on and where milk comes from.
"Yes, it does," shouts Kate. She is sitting at the kitchen table with Kevin. They are playing with Kate's plastic animals and drinking milk. "No, it doesn't," laughs Kevin. "Milk doesn't come from the fridge." Kate jumps down from her chair and opens the fridge door with a flourish. "So what is this, then?" Kate points to three cartons of milk. "You see," she says, "fresh from the factory to our fridge." Kevin splutters. "You don't really think that milk comes from the fridge? Milk comes from a cow!" Kate cannot believe her ears. She pulls a horrible face and shouts: "Yuck!" She finds the cow in the pile of animals. "Now, show me where the milk comes from then," she says, and she gives the cow to Kevin. Under the cow's belly is a kind of pink sack with four teats. That's the udder. "You have to pull on those and milk comes out. Just like water out of a tap," says Kevin. "Now do you believe that milk does not come from the factory?" he shouts proudly. Kate picks up the cow from the table. She thinks hard for a moment and then shouts out laughing: "No, Kevin, of course not. Milk does come from a factory. Only this factory is black and white and has four feet and four teats. The cow is the only real milk factory."
Right. A bit more syrup and then mmm... Enjoy! I'm sure you like pancakes too, don't you? Perhaps you've helped your mummy to make them sometimes. If you have, then you'll know that a lot of things have to happen before those delicious pancakes end up on your plate.

First you have to go to the shops to buy flour, eggs, milk and butter. When you get home you mix the batter. And when that's ready, it goes in the pan with a bit of butter. You fry pancakes in a frying pan.

But you can't fry all food.

Look, here are three empty pans. On the sticker sheet you will find different kinds of food. Put the food in the right kind of pan.

Soup, of course, can't go in a frying pan.

Which pan does it go in then?

Lovely fresh eggs
‘Eggs, milk, butter and flour: I think we’re ready,’ says Kevin. Kate sits next to him and watches. Kate does not like cooking, but she does like pancakes. Kevin opens the bag of flour. It’s very difficult. “Here, give it to me,” says Kate. She tears it open in one go. So hard that half of the pack flies through the air across the kitchen. Kevin’s hair is covered and Kate looks like a white ghost. They can’t help laughing. “I hope there is enough flour left,” says Kevin, and he tips the rest of the pack into the bowl. “What now?” asks Kate. Kevin hesitates for a moment, but then pushes the box of eggs toward his friend who is already stretching out her hand to take it. Oops! Her hand knocks the eggs onto the floor. Kevin jumps and springs down from his chair. “Oh, sorry Kevin,” says Kate. “Have we still got enough?” Kevin hesitates for a moment, but then pushes the box of eggs toward his friend who is already stretching out her hand to take it. Oops! Her hand knocks the eggs onto the floor. Kevin jumps and springs down from his chair. “Oh, sorry Kevin,” says Kate. “Have we still got enough?” Kevin hesitates for a moment, but then pushes the box of eggs toward his friend who is already stretching out her hand to take it. Oops! Her hand knocks the eggs onto the floor. Kevin jumps and springs down from his chair. “Oh, sorry Kevin,” says Kate. “Have we still got enough?” Kevin hesitates for a moment, but then pushes the box of eggs toward his friend who is already stretching out her hand to take it. Oops! Her hand knocks the eggs onto the floor. Kevin jumps and springs down from his chair. “Oh, sorry Kevin,” says Kate. “Have we still got enough?” Kevin hesitates for a moment, but then pushes the box of eggs toward his friend who is already stretching out her hand to take it. Oops! Her hand knocks the eggs onto the floor. Kevin jumps and springs down from his chair. “Oh, sorry Kevin,” says Kate. “Have we still got enough?”

Kevin pours the milk into the bowl. Kate sees how the flour, the eggs and the milk slowly change into a dirty-yellow gunk. Yuck, she thinks. Am I going to have to eat that in a minute? Now all we have to do is make it into a smooth mixture,” says Kevin. He takes the mixer, plugs it in and presses the button. Help! What’s happening? There is far too much milk in the batter. The whizzing mixer flings the yellow gunk all over the place. Not only are Kate and Kevin dripping with batter, the worktops and the floor are covered in it. While a shocked Kevin is wiping the batter from his face, the kitchen door opens. In comes the lady from next door who lets out a squeal. “What a mess there is in here!”

She sets a big pile of golden-brown pancakes down on the table. “Look, I have a few left over, you can enjoy those later.” Kate snatches a cloth and wipes the dripping pancakes off the cupboards. She breathes a sigh of relief because these golden-brown pancakes look much nicer than the pancakes trickling down the cupboards.
Just look how big my table is! But can you see that all the chairs are empty? Eating together is much nicer than eating on your own. Who do you like to sit round the table with at mealtimes? Your mummy and daddy? Your grandma? Or maybe even your teddy? Get a pencil or felt-tip pen and draw in your guests on the empty chairs.

There is plenty of room.

Oh yes … and don’t forget to draw yourself of course.

IT’S NICE............................................TO EAT TOGETHER!

I’d like to eat crinkly chips with you!

This is nice!

This is nice!
“Today is a very special crinkly chips day, Kevin,” Kate says to her friend. “Do you know why?” Kevin shakes his head. “Grandma is here!” says Kate. Kate always loves it when grandma comes. Then everyone usually talks and laughs a lot.

They are all sitting nicely round the table together. Kate sticks a chip under her nose and pulls a funny face. Kevin can’t help laughing out loud. But Kate’s mother does not think it is funny at all. “Stop playing around, Kate! Just eat your food,” she says. Kate reluctantly puts a chip into her mouth. She does not feel like eating. Grandma looks at the two friends who are both picking at their chips. “Have you ever played the twenty-minute game?” she asks. Kate and Kevin look at grandma in surprise. She takes a kitchen timer and turns the dial to twenty. “The bell will ring in twenty minutes and whoever has an empty plate when the bell rings is the winner.” “Oh, that’s fun!” shouts Kate. She starts stuffing her mouth full of chips. Kevin does the same. “And you don’t need to stuff your mouths,” says grandma. “Twenty minutes is long enough to eat nicely and finish your plates.” Kate quickly lets a few chips slide out of her mouth. Luckily she does not have to rush. “So Kate,” says grandma, “tell me all about what you learned at school today.” Kate begins to talk about it full of enthusiasm. Meanwhile, Kevin carries on eating quietly. “Hey!” shouts Kate all of a sudden. “That’s not fair! When I am talking, I can’t eat, and so Kevin will be the winner.” Then grandma turns to Kevin and asks him exactly the same question. Kevin talks about his day first and then mummy and daddy have their turns. BRING! The bell on the timer rings. Kate puts her last chip in her mouth and cries out: “I won. Look, my plate is completely empty.”

“No, you didn’t,” shouts Kevin. “I won, because my plate is empty too.” Grandma takes a big book of fairy tales out of her bag and reads a story to the two winners as a reward. “Now do you see that today is a special crinkly chip day?” asks Kate. Kevin agrees completely.
Ice cream, lollies and marshmallows look delicious. You can hardly wait to take a bite. But do you ever try tasting something that you have not eaten before? Like a piece of cauliflower, a meat ball or a lettuce leaf? Sometimes you have to taste something first before you know for sure that you do not like it. Today we are going to start practising.

It will be fun, you’ll see. There are all kinds of food in the taste-something-new plan that we are going to taste: soup, vegetables, fruit, potatoes and pasta. There are treats, too, such as chips and pizza. Look at the taste-something-new plan with your daddy and mummy and choose something that you would like to learn to enjoy eating.
Kate and Kevin are sitting at the kitchen table. Mummy has given them some play dough. Kate has made a beautiful red fire engine with a ladder and flashing lights. Kevin is making food. He has made spaghetti out of the red play dough and he has used brown play dough to make small meatballs. Kate cannot help laughing. "Don't you think about anything other than food?" she asks Kevin. "No, not much," he answers. "If you want to be the best chef in the world, you have to practise a lot and taste things." Kate shivers just at the thought of it. Yuck, tasting! "Are you going to sell crinkly chips in your restaurant as well?" she asks her friend. "No, of course not," says Kevin. "I don't want a chip restaurant. I want a restaurant with special dishes." "Well then I'm sorry, but you won't see me there often," says Kate. Crossly she carries on working on her fire engine.

Kevin makes parsley out of tiny pieces of green play dough and sprinkles them over the plate of pretend spaghetti. Kate takes a sideways glance at the plate. It looks lovely and she is actually a bit jealous of Kevin. He can eat so many things already. Soon they won't be able to be friends any more, because Kate doesn't like anything. "Taste," says Kevin pushing the plate of play dough spaghetti under her nose. "No!" shrieks Kate. "Yuck..." She turns her face away quickly.

Kevin walks across to the worktop and takes a mandarin out of the fruit bowl. Kate watches how he peels it and puts the first piece in his mouth. "Mmmm, it's lovely and sweet," he says. Kevin carries on eating and enjoying his mandarin. "Wait!" shouts Kate. "Can I try?" Kevin looks up in surprise. "Are you sure?" he asks. "Yes," says Kate. "You think it's nice. So maybe I should try it too." Kevin gives Kate a piece of the mandarin. She touches it warily with her tongue. It's a bit sour. But no, wait a minute... it's quite sweet! She puts the piece of mandarin into her mouth but then takes it out again. Then she looks at it hard and, without giving it another thought, she puts it back into her mouth. She chews a couple of times and then swallows it down. Kevin gives her a cheer. He flings his arms around Kate's neck. "If you carry on like that you will soon become a real Food Princess," he says. "Now I can sell crinkly chips and mandarins in my restaurant." He takes a big piece of paper and makes a 'taste-something-new' plan for Kate. "Keep trying, Kate. When the taste-something-new plan is completely full, you can be the first to taste my special dishes." "OK," says Kate, "but let's begin with spaghetti with meatballs. That's special enough for me." They hang the 'taste-something-new' plan up in the kitchen, because Kate does want to be a Food Princess of course. Who wouldn't?
To make tasting new foods more fun, I have invented a kind of game: the step-by-step taste-something-new game. Look, this is MiMi the food fairy’s super special taste-something-new plate with music and lights. This will make the tasting much more fun. Imagine that you have decided to learn to try apple. Then you put a small piece of apple on each of the coloured dots on your plate. Each time you try a piece (even if it’s only a tiny speck), you get a star. You can take the stars from the magic toadstool and put them on your place mat. This is how it works:

1. Take the piece of apple from the first dot and hold it on your finger. Hold it against your lips and count to three. Then you can wipe your mouth with a serviette.

2. Now you can put the piece of apple on your tongue. That’s really brave of you! Wipe your mouth again.

3. We are going to do that again. But now we are going to close our lips, and so the piece of apple is right inside your mouth now. Just count to five and then you can wipe your mouth with your serviette. Did you manage that? You’re a real star.

4. You are doing fantastically! Are you ready for the next step? Put a piece in your mouth and close your mouth. Dare you keep it there while you count to ten? Brilliant. Now wipe your mouth with your serviette again.

5. Now hold the piece of apple in your mouth while you count to five. Chew it three times and magic it away with a drink of water. You are doing fantastically… Before you know it, you will be a Food Prince or a Food Princess!

Have you done it all properly and earned all five stars? Then you can open the magic toadstool and take your sticker and your prize. The sooner you start tasting, the sooner you will know what’s hidden in the toadstool. Come on, what are you waiting for? Good luck!
Kate and Kevin are playing with Kevin’s toy kitchen set. Kevin mixes everything together with a small wooden spoon. “Nearly ready,” he shouts. “What are you making?” asks Kate. Kevin makes up a dish: “This is Apple à la Française and soup à la apple.” Will you try the table, Kate?” “Are we really going to eat it then?” asks Kate, pulling a face. “Yes, of course we are,” says Kevin. “But I don’t like apple,” says Kate. “What?” says Kevin surprised, “I thought everyone liked apple.” “I don’t,” says Kate. “Have you ever tried it?” asks Kevin. “I don’t need to try it, because I know I don’t like it.” Then Kevin runs into the kitchen and comes back with a plate and a magic toadstool. “I bet that you will try some apple today!” The plate has a special base with a nice picture and five spots, and if you touch the base with your magic spoon it plays a tune and lights flash. “This is a taste-something-new plate,” says Kevin. Kevin puts the magic toadstool down next to the plate. There is a secret surprise in here. If you want to know what the secret surprise is, you have to taste first,” says Kevin. Kate loves surprises. She scratches her head. “OK, bring that apple,” she says, putting on a brave face. Kevin takes a very small piece of apple out of the pan and puts it on the spot on the taste-something-new plate. “There. Now put this bit of apple on your finger.” “Ha, ha, easy-peasy,” thinks Kate. And she puts the piece of fruit on her finger tip. “Now touch your lips with it,” says Kevin. Kate does to that. She touches her lip with the apple and takes it away again fast. “So can I open the magic toadstool now?” she asks. “No, but you get a star,” says Kevin. “In a minute you’ll see what you can do with that.” Kate is not enjoying this so much now, but she puts the piece of apple onto her tongue. “Hurry up with the counting,” she shouts. Kevin counts: “1… 2… 3… 4… 5!” Kate immediately spits out the bit of apple. She goes to grab the magic toadstool, but Kevin gets there faster and he snatches it away. “We’re not ready yet,” he shouts laughing. Kate does not like this game anymore. “Forget it,” she shouts at Kevin. “I don’t like this game.” Kate is not going to play anymore.
Poor Kate. She gave up very quickly, don’t you think? I bet you are much braver. Did you find a nice surprise in your magic toadstool?

Now we are going to start earning the stickers for your taste-something-new plan, because, as you know, you have to have a full taste-something-new plan to be a real Food Prince or Food Princess.

Take your special taste-something-new plate, your magic cutlery set, the magic toadstool and your place mat. Now we are ready to begin. For every bite you take you can put a reward star on your place mat. Once you have got five stars, you can open the toadstool again.

There you’ll find your surprise and a nice sticker to go on your taste-something-new plan. With your taste-something-new plate and the stars, I’m sure you will soon manage to fill it right up. Then you will see that everyone will be really really proud of you. And so will I!
Kevin picks up the plate and the magic toadstool from the table and starts walking in the direction of the kitchen. “So can I see what’s in the magic toadstool now?” asks Kate. “No, of course not,” says Kevin. “You haven’t earned the reward. You are not allowed to look at the surprise unless you have eaten all the bits of apple.” Kate looks at Kevin crossly. “I think it’s a really stupid game that you’ve made up,” she says. She turns around and with her back to Kevin she says: “I’m not playing with you any more.” “But I didn’t make it up,” calls Kevin. “Mom the food fairy invented it! And it’s a really good game!” “How do you know?” asks Kate. “I know, because I have played it myself.” Kate turns around in surprise. “But you already like everything, don’t you?” she asks. “Yes, I do now,” says Kevin, “but I didn’t at first.” Kate cannot believe her ears. Her friend Kevin who likes everything – carrots and cauliflower, apples, mandarins, and yes, even sprouts! Did he have to learn to like all these foods too? Kate quickly puts the place mat and the taste-something-new plate back down on the table. Kevin takes another small piece of apple out of the toy pan and puts it on the taste-something-new plate. “Now you have to put this piece in your mouth and keep your mouth shut while I count to ten.” Kate takes a deep breath. She thinks for a moment, and then does what Kevin says. Kevin counts again, but this time to ten. And “plop”, the piece of apple flies through the air and lands on the floor. Kevin has already put out a new piece. “Now this time we are really going to eat it,” he says. Kate looks at Kevin in disbelief. “Do I really have to eat it?” she asks. “Yes,” says Kevin. “If you want to know what’s in the magic toadstool, you have to.” Kate thinks about it for a moment. Then she grabs the piece of apple from the plate. She chews and swallows and chews and swallows again, and then opens her mouth wide. “Look, Kevin! All gone. So where is my prize?” She holds out her hand and Kevin does not hesitate, but gives her both the last star and the magic toadstool. Triumphant she places the last star on the place mat and opens the lid of the toadstool. “The secret bottom opens as well,” says Kevin. Kate opens the base and what does she see there? A sticker. “You see,” cries Kevin. “Can we now finally sit down at the table?” The Apple à la Française is getting cold.” And he cheerfully serves up a few more pieces onto the plastic plate from the toy dinner set. When Kate has finished playing and she returns home, she quickly runs into the kitchen where her taste-something-new plan has been hung up. She has been careful to save her sticker and she proudly sticks it on.
You have to eat if you want to grow. Your body needs food so that you can run, play, sleep and talk. Your body is just like a factory. When you put a piece of bread in your mouth, the factory starts to work. First your teeth grind everything up fine. Then you swallow it and it goes into your stomach. There is juice in your stomach that makes the food thin and soft, so that it can slide through your small intestine more easily. The small intestine is like a long wiggly tube. Your body takes everything that it needs from the piece of bread. What’s left is a thick brown mess... Yes, you’re right – poo! And because we don’t need that, it comes out again in the toilet. Here is a picture of the poo factory. Can you follow the path of the piece of bread all the way until it ends up in the toilet?

Yes, yes, we all have our own poo factory!
Kate is sitting on the floor with a very big sheet of paper. She is drawing. She has a little ring in her mouth. It is a silver ring with a ladybird on it. She got it from her grandma on her third birthday. The flat in Kate’s picture is on fire. Quickly she draws a big fire engine. The fire engine tears round the corner, siren wailing, and saves all the people. She is so busy drawing her picture that she does not hear mummy come in and stand behind her. “Hello, my precious firefighter,” and she gives Kate a kiss on the top of her head. Kate lets out a squeal and she forgets the ring in her mouth. The shock makes her swallow it. Kate is very quiet for a moment, but when she understands what has happened she starts to cry. Mummy has no idea what the matter is and tries to comfort her. But Kate is inconsolable. She has swallowed her favourite ring. Kate doesn’t tell her mother. Her mother has warned her so often: “Don’t put strange things in your mouth, Kate. It’s dangerous.” Now Kate understands why. The ring is in her tummy. How can it be got out? “Did I give you such a fright?” asks her mother. Kate says nothing. She nods her head weakly and her mother gives her a sweet to help her get over the shock.

The next day Kate is sitting on the toilet. She needs to poo. She hears a “Plop! Pling!” She jumps up quickly and, yes, there is her ring shining in the poo. She is so happy and wipes the ladybird ring out with her finger. And while she is washing her ring, Kate thinks: “Now I know that I have to be careful about the ring. As she is telling him the tears run down her cheeks. Kevin can’t help laughing out loud and Kate looks at him crossly. “Don’t you know how bad it is?” she says. “I might die.” “Oh no,” says Kevin. “That really won’t kill you.” Kevin lifts up Kate’s T-shirt. He picks up a felt-tip pen from the floor and draws a ring on her tummy. “Look,” he says. “The ring is still here now. But soon it will go down this wiggly pipe. Then off it goes to your bottom, and tomorrow it will come out in your poo. That is the poo factory!” Kate looks down at her tummy. “Be careful or you’ll flush it away,” says Kevin.
In all the countries of the world, people have different ways of eating and often eat different dishes from what we are used to in Britain. Yet you probably eat foreign food more often than you think.

Pizza comes from Italy and noodles come from China. In China people eat with chopsticks, and in a lot of African countries people eat with their fingers. I don’t suppose your mother allows you to do that, because in Britain we usually eat with a knife, fork and spoon.

I say usually, because there are some kinds of food that it is perfectly alright to eat with your fingers. Look at the foods on this page. I wonder if you know which you can, and are allowed to, eat with your fingers and which you can’t.
“Are you coming out to play?” asks Kate, as she walks into her friend’s kitchen. Kevin is sitting at the table. His mother says that he has to finish his dinner first. “What is it?” Kate asks pulling a face. “Noodles,” answers Kevin. “They look like worms,” cries Kate. “Is it horrible?” she asks, feeling sorry for him. “Horrible? It’s delicious. It’s my favourite meal.” He lifts another mouthful of noodles towards his mouth. He is not eating with a fork, but with small sticks in one hand. Sometimes Kate does not understand him at all. “How can that be your favourite meal?” she asks as a shiver runs down her spine. “Kate, this is chow mein,” he says. “It’s a Chinese dish. It’s delicious and you have to eat it with chopsticks. That’s the right way to eat it,” says Kevin. “And what if you can’t eat with chopsticks?” asks Kate. “Then you can never go to China and you can never eat chow mein noodles,” Kevin replies.

Kevin gives Kate the chopsticks. “Do you want to have a go?” he asks. Kate, of course, does not want to eat noodles, but she does like the look of those chopsticks. She tries to pick up some of Kevin’s food, but it is not very easy. The chopsticks wobble about between her fingers. And as soon as it seems as if it will work, the noodles slide out between the chopsticks again. Kevin can’t help laughing at this. Kate tries with the chopsticks using two hands, but that doesn’t work either. “Everybody eats with chopsticks in China,” says Kevin. Kate tries once more. This time she manages to pick up a noodle between the two sticks and to lift it up from the plate. “Kate look!” she shouts. “I’ve done it! Yes! I can eat with chopsticks.” “Well,” says Kevin. “The noodle is not in your mouth yet.” Kate lifts the noodle up high and without thinking she moves the slippery worm towards her mouth. She finds it really exciting and she lets the noodle slide into her mouth. Half of it disappears into her mouth, while the other half flips up and sticks under her nose like a moustache. Kevin bursts out laughing at this funny sight. Kate struggles to get the last bit in too. Now she has to laugh as well. And so she swallows the noodle just like that, without thinking about it. “Mm, it’s quite nice,” says Kate. And as they are walking outside she asks Kevin: “Do you think they also eat chips with chopsticks in China?”

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Noodles with chopsticks!
Real Food Princes and Food Princesses eat lots of vegetables. I see that you have already stuck on quite a lot of stickers. Fantastic! That means that you have already tried a lot of different kinds of food and I’m sure you’ve also tried a lot of different kinds of vegetables. I’m sure that you also know that vegetables are healthy and very important if you want to grow big. On this page you can see all kinds of vegetables. I wonder if you can tell me the names of the different kinds. Shall we try?
Kate has a pet rabbit. His name is Thumper. Today is his fourth birthday. "Shall we put paper chains up in his hutch?" Kate asks her mother. But mummy does not think this is a good idea, because Thumper eats everything. He eats newspaper and sticks, and once he even bit a piece out of Kate’s trousers. No, no paper chains for Thumper. Kate walks to the fridge. What do you eat when it’s your birthday? Of course! Birthday cake… Kate lifts up the cheese and pushes the sausage to one side. But she can’t see anything at all. No cake and no cake decorations. Only boring things like butter and yoghurt.

"Why such a sorry face?" asks mummy. "Would you like to have your birthday with no paper chains and no cake?" cries Kate crossly. "But darling Kate," says mummy, "rabbits don’t eat cake." Kate thinks about it. Mummy is right, rabbits eat carrots and grass. Not sweets and cake. Then a big smile crosses her face. She dives into the fridge again and takes out carrots, cauliflower, broccoli and parsley.

"Am I on time?" It’s Kevin who comes in with an invitation in his hand. He is invited to Thumper’s party too. "I’m nearly ready," cries Kate, who is getting a bit annoyed arranging all the vegetables. "But you mustn’t look yet, It’s a surprise." Kevin goes and sits at the kitchen table to wait, eager to know what Kate is doing. "Ready!" calls Kate. She turns round carefully. Kevin does not know what he is looking at. "Hey, what is that?" he asks. "A vegetable cake," cries Kate proudly. "Because you have to have cake when it’s a birthday, even when it’s a rabbit’s birthday." Kate proudly leads the way with the magnificent vegetable cake. "Are you coming with me? We are going to sing." Kate has brought two small plates with her. "Do you want a bit too, Kevin?" she asks. Kevin takes a piece of carrot and a piece of cauliflower from the plate and Kate also takes a big bit of both. They put the cake in Thumper’s hutch and sing "Happy birthday to you" very loudly. Thumper nibbles contentedly on the broccoli. "This is the best rabbit’s birthday party ever!" cries Kate happily. Feeding pleased with herself, she takes a bite from her carrot. And Kevin? … He completely agrees with her.
Have you ever been out for a meal in a restaurant? And did you enjoy it? I'm sure you did. In a restaurant you get the tastiest dishes and they are written out on a menu for you to choose from. Here is a special menu for children. Read it with your mummy and if you listen carefully you will find that some of the things on the menu are really weird. Can you tell me what you can and can't eat?

Menu
- Poo sandwich
- Sausage and chips
- Steak
- Grilled Shoe sole
- Grasshopper ice cream
- Apple pie
- Frogspawn pudding
‘Kate I have a surprise,’ says mummy. ‘We are going to a real restaurant.’ Kate is not happy. Oh no, not a restaurant. ‘Do I have to come?’ she asks. In restaurants everything has a funny name and all the food has weird sauce on it. Even the chips are different. ‘The food in restaurants is horrible,’ cries Kate. ‘Just wait and see,’ says her mother. ‘I’m sure that you’ll really like this restaurant,’ says her father. They have to drive in the car for half an hour and Kate sits in the back. In restaurants you have to stay on your chair and talk quietly. Yuck. This is not a nice surprise at all. The car stops. Mummy gets out and opens Kate’s door. ‘We’re there!’ Very reluctantly, Kate gets out of the car. The restaurant is right in the middle of the woods. Mummy goes in first and then Kate and Daddy follow.

The tables are neatly laid. It is really quite nice! They choose a table. Kate plonks her elbows down on the table and stares ahead looking bored. Mummy picks up the menu. ‘What shall I have…?’ she says. ‘Frogs’ legs, or pigs’ ears? Or maybe I’ll have the snails in garlic sauce?’ Mummy peeps over the top of the menu and she has to smile when she sees Kate’s face. ‘No, I think, after all, I’ll go for the fried grasshoppers,’ she says. ‘What do you want Kate? Have you decided yet? Or do you want to look at the menu?’ She passes the menu to Kate. But … No! What? To her great surprise, there are only pictures of pancakes on the menu: pancakes with syrup, with bacon, with banana, with pretty paper umbrellas and pictures of animals. Mummy bursts out laughing: ‘Surprise!’ And then all at once Kate sees that they really are in a very special restaurant – with special … kinds of pancakes! When Kate finally realises what kind of restaurant they are in, she bursts out laughing too. She orders a big pancake with sugar. And before she takes a bite, she says: ‘You are right mummy. This really is a surprise and it’s a nice surprise.’
You know now that food is good for you. It makes the poo factory work and that gives you energy to dance and jump. Now, it’s also great if you don’t always eat the same thing. What do you like in your sandwiches? Sweet things or savoury or both? Draw your favourite sandwich filling. There are enough slices of bread to make plenty of different tasty sandwiches.
"Are you ready?" Mummy is standing by the door with her coat on. Kate is being slow. She is looking at her taste-something-new plan in the kitchen. Kate has not tried any meat or fish yet. She knows only too well that she cannot be a Food Princess if she has not earned all the stickers. "Come on, we have to go, Kate. The shop will be closing soon." Kate grabs her coat and follows her mother. On the way to the shop they walk past Kevin’s house. He is playing in the garden. "Can Kevin come with us?" Kate asks her mother. Yes, that’s OK!

It is very busy in the supermarket. Kate and Kevin get a small shopping trolley. Mummy stops by the meat counter. "What kind of meat shall we have Kate?" her mother asks. Kate thinks about her taste-something-new plan and the stickers that she still needs. But when she sees the meat set out in the cabinet, all of a sudden she doesn’t feel hungry any more. "Oh, may I choose?" shouts Kevin. "Yummy meatballs?" "No, yuck," says Kate. "Or a lovely hamburger?" says Kevin. But every time Kevin suggests something, Kate just cries "Ugh, horrible, yuck." "What about a juicy chicken drumstick?" asks Kevin. Now Kate really explodes: "I don’t like meat! And you know what? I don’t want to be a Food Princess any more." Kevin looks in surprise at the furious Kate, who has gone completely red. "Would you two like a piece of salami?" the butcher asks the two friends. Kevin nods his head. And Kate...? ...She suddenly says: "Yes, please." Her face lights up. "Hey," says Kevin, "I thought you didn’t like meat!" "Yes, but a piece of salami isn’t meat," Kate pops the piece of salami into her mouth. "Salami is real meat," says Kevin, looking at the butcher. And the butcher tells Kevin he is right. "Hmm, meat?" Kate stops chewing. She ponders for a moment and then her face lights up. "Salami is meat! Yippee!" she shouts out joyfully. Kevin and mummy look at each other. What is the matter with Kate all of a sudden? Kate skips home happily. When they get home she takes a meat sticker from the sticker sheet. "Of course I want to be a Food Princess," she thinks. And she quickly sticks the sticker onto her taste-something-new plan.
Have you nearly filled up your taste-something-new plan? Good, then you are almost ready to be a Food Prince or Food Princess! Super! Everything that you have tried has a different taste. An apple is sweet and a piece of salami is salty. I wonder if you can recognise the different tastes. A good way to test that is the blindfold game.

Different kinds of food are set out on a board. Your mummy will choose them for you. They are all pieces of food that you have tried before. With the blindfold on, you put the pieces of food into your mouth one at a time and then you guess what each piece of food is. Good luck! If you are nearly ready to be a Food Prince or a Food Princess, like Kate, this will be easy-peasy. Have fun!

TASTING IS....................................................FUN!
Kate skips home with Kevin. It’s Wednesday, so it’s crinkly chip day!!! She swings the kitchen door wide open, sticks her nose round the corner and sniffs very hard. But that’s strange. It doesn’t smell of crinkly chips at all. Kate looks in surprise at her mother who has laid the table beautifully. In her hand she has two tea towels. She smiles mysteriously. “But mummy, today is crinkly chip day, isn’t it?” asks Kate in dismay. “Today we are going to do something very special. I have made a surprise menu, but I am not going to tell you what it is. You will have to guess what we are eating and whoever gets the most right is the winner.” Kate and Kevin look at each other. “But that’s easy,” cries Kevin, “I can just look at what’s on my plate.” “Yes, but I haven’t told you everything yet,” says mummy. “You can’t look at what’s on your plate. Go and sit down and then I’m going to blindfold you!” Mummy blindfolds them both. “Wow, this is exciting,” cries Kate. “I’m going to win, you’ll see.” “Yes, we’ll see,” cries Kevin. Secretly Kate is a bit scared. She has already tried a lot of food, but not yet everything. What if mummy puts something on her plate that she hasn’t tried before. “Good, we’re ready to start,” says mummy. She puts a piece of cooked carrot on each of their plates. Kate has it in her mouth in a flash and tastes it… “Carrot!” shouts Kevin. Kate is just too late with her answer. “One point for Kevin,” cries mummy. “Are you ready? Off we go again.” Kate really really wants to win a point too; so she quickly puts the next morsel in her mouth. It is a piece of broccoli. But before she can say anything, Kevin shouts out “Broccoli!” “That’s not fair!” Kate cries crossly. “I want to win a point too!” “Two points for Kevin. Come on Kate,” cries her mother, “you can do it.” The next bit of mystery food is already on her plate. Into her mouth it goes; chew and taste. “I know,” shouts Kate. “It’s cucumber!” This time Kate was faster than Kevin. “One point for Kate,” says mummy. “And now the last bit, so pay attention!” She dishes up a big helping onto both plates. Kate can already smell it and before she puts anything into her mouth she yells: “Crinkly chips!” “Yayee, I have two points as well!” Kate puts off her blindfold and jumps up and down for joy next to her chair. “Now I have two winners,” says mummy. And while Kevin takes off his blindfold, she puts two magic toadstools next to their plates. Just look what’s inside! In the toadstool is her favourite dessert. “You do have to finish your plates first, of course,” says mummy. Kate takes a big mouthful of crinkly chips. Wednesday is crinkly chips day, that’s just the way it is and nothing or nobody can change that.

**Eyes closed...**
Learning to try things and to enjoy your food is super important. But it is just as important to know how to eat properly. Animals eat with their snouts or with their paws – and people? That’s right! People eat with a knife and fork. To make sure that the table does not get into a mess, the grown-ups invented table manners. These are things that we agree to do to make sure that everyone eats nicely. You may have learned already to keep your mouth shut when you are eating. You can only do that if you do not put too much food into your mouth at once. Also, only start to eat when everyone’s food has been dished up. And the hardest rule of all, of course, is to stay sitting down until everyone has finished, or otherwise to ask politely if you may leave the table. Now you know how it should be done, have a go at it so that you can set a good example. Good luck!
Kate looks nervously at her reflection in the glass in the front door. She is going to a real dinner party at Kevin’s house for the first time. Mummy has tied her hair in bunches with ribbons and she has her best dress on, of course. Kate fidgets about on the step. She is nervous. What if she does not like the food? “Ding dong!” Kate rings Kevin’s doorbell. The door swings wide open and there stands Kevin. Kate can’t help laughing when she sees him. He looks funny with his combed hair and smart shirt. Kevin has to laugh too, because Kate never wears ribbons in her hair. Together they walk into the dining room. “Wow, look how beautiful the table is,” cries Kate. It gleams and glistens from all sides. “What are we going to eat?” she asks, a bit anxiously. “Wait and see,” Kevin smiles mysteriously. He had helped his mother to fold the serviettes and that was a pretty difficult job. Kate pulls out a chair and sits down. But Kevin cries: “No, you can’t sit down yet. Not until everyone is here!” Kate stands up again and quickly pushes the chair back under the table. “Come on, we have to wash our hands first,” says Kevin. Together they walk to the kitchen. There are four pans on the cooker all bubbling away. Kate sniffs: she does not recognise these smells. “Kevin, now what are we going to eat?” she asks again. Kevin does not answer her. “Come on now,” he says with a smile. The adults have already sat down and Kate and Kevin are allowed to sit next to each other. Then the door opens and Kevin’s mummy comes in with a big tray of plates. She gives everyone a plate. Kate closes her eyes. But then all of a sudden there is a very familiar smell. She opens her eyes and sees on top of her beautiful shiny plate a small plate with … crinkly chips! Kevin screams: “Surprise!” “We are having a very special dinner party – a crinkly chips dinner party.” Kate’s eyes are popping out of her head. Kevin’s mummy has made a crinkly chips dinner especially for the children. What a surprise! Relieved, Kate immediately starts stabbing her chips with her fork and lifting them towards her mouth. But then Kevin’s mummy calls out: “Just a minute! These are not ordinary crinkly chips, Kate. These are very chic chips. So of course they have to be eaten very nicely and properly.” Kate smiles politely until everyone starts to eat and then she neatly spears a chip with her fork. She enjoys her favourite meal, eating properly with her mouth closed. “Mmm… delicious,” she thinks and it isn’t even crinkly chip day!
What do I see there?
Have you filled up the whole of your taste-something-new plan?
Have you earned all your stickers?
I am really proud of you and I bet I am not the only one.
You deserve the only real good-eater crown.
Take a good look at yourself in the mirror. What do you see?
Exactly, a real Food Prince / Food Princess!
I am proud of you, you are a real star.
From now on, you'll keep on trying more and more things.
You'll find that you like more and more things, just you wait and see!

CONGRATULATIONS............PRINCE OR PRINCESS!
Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to you!

Kate’s bedroom door slowly opens and in come mum- and daddy singing. Kate knows exactly what will happen next. First she will get a kiss and a present from both of them and then she will get a birthday crown, which she may wear for the whole day. Kate likes the crown best of all. That’s what makes a birthday really special. “Happy birthday, Kate,” says daddy. He gives her a big fat kiss and a present. Kate tears off the paper. Out comes a magnificent fire engine with lights and a siren. “Yippee!” shouts Kate. She gives daddy a cuddle. Now it’s mummy’s turn. Kate closes her eyes, so that her mother can put the birthday crown on her head. …But… what’s going on? Mummy gives her a present, but no crown. “And my crown?” Mummy smiles mysteriously and says: “No, this year there is no birthday crown. We are going to do something different this time.” Kate is on the point of tears. She is disappointed but dare not say so, because she has just been given a beautiful present. So she can’t now start crying about a crown, can she?

Then they go downstairs. Every year mummy makes her a special breakfast with all kinds of nice things to eat. “Close your eyes,” says mummy. She holds her hand in front of Kate’s eyes and with her other hand opens the kitchen door. Kate has butterflies in her tummy. Everyone is being so mysterious. Mummy takes her hand away. “You can look now.” Oh! What a surprise. Kevin is sitting at the table. “Happy birthday, Kate,” he cries and he jumps off his chair to give Kate a kiss. But that’s not all. The surprise breakfast is something really very special this time. In the middle of the table there’s a big cake with candles. In the middle of the cake stands the magic toadstool. Kate sits down on her decorated chair. She takes a big breath and blows out all the candles in one go. Then without wasting any time she eats up her birthday cake at once. “Open it,” says Kevin, as he puts the magic toadstool down on her plate. Still surprised, Kate opens the secret base. There is a sticker and a note. Mummy reads the note out loud: “You have stuck all the stickers on your taste-something-new plan and from now on you are a real Food Princess. Congratulations!” Kate looks at her taste-something-new plan. “But that’s not right,” she says in dismay. “I still need a sticker for treats.” “That’s why we’re having cake for breakfast today,” cries daddy smiling. “If birthday cake is not a treat, then I don’t know what is!” Then everyone bursts out laughing at Kate’s face. Proudly Kate steps over to her taste-something-new plan and sticks the sticker on the last empty space. When she turns round, mummy is standing there with a magnificent crown. The only real good-eater crown for the only real Food princess. Kate beams with happiness. What a party!
The part of the Eat Well Dinner Book is for the parents of little food princes and food princesses. Through this book, Difrax aims to help them understand the eating behaviour of their young children better, whether they are children who will eat anything or children who are, in fact, picky eaters. The information is intended as advice, and so it does not contain hard and fast rules. We advise you to always follow your own instincts. Parents know their own child best and no two children are the same. So just extract the information from the book that you yourself find useful. Happy reading, tasting and eating!

The book uses he/she, him/her interchangeably and also daddy/mummy/partner. Obviously, however, we want to address everyone who is involved in bringing up small children. We also hope that single parents will enjoy using this book.

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**AND FINALLY**

This book about MiMi the food fairy has been especially produced for the parents of picky eaters. It is informative, but also fun to read. The story is based on the most up-to-date insights of an experienced dietician. Monique Thomas-Holtus is an eating counsellor who works at the University Medical Centre in Utrecht. She treats children with severe to very severe eating problems.

“Don’t like it” gives way to “Mmm, yummy”. This does not mean that every confirmed sandwich eater will suddenly start liking pasta. But within the scope of each individual child’s preferences, a great deal is possible.

In the following pages you can read about how you can ensure that every child can enjoy meals in his or her own way. That will make mealtimes a pleasanter experience for everyone!
The eating phases from breastfeeding to solid food

Every child goes through different eating phases, usually without any problems worth mentioning. A little one learns a lot of new things in a relatively short time, especially in the first year of life. The child starts with breastfeeding or bottle-feeding and gradually moves on to spoon-feeding. The first foods given on a spoon are very smooth, such as puréed fruit and vegetables and baby cereal. In the next phase, the consistency of the food progresses to thick and smooth, to smooth with bits, to roughly mashed and finally to more solid food.

A STUMBLING BLOCK ALONG THE ROAD?

What many parents do not know is that there are children who never learn to accept one of the intermediate phases like smooth food with more solid bits in it. It is important to accept that as a fact before you go any further. It is also good to realize that there are also quite a few adults who have an aversion to smooth food with bits in it. They would be just as inclined to feel sick if you presented them with lumpy porridge.

"I AM TWO, SO I SAY NO!"

After the first birthday, which is a milestone in more ways than one, parents often hear a sigh of relief. "There, what a relief, now my child can eat with the rest of the family." But it seems that this cannot always be taken for granted. This is because it is not only in his or her eating behaviours that your child makes great strides in the first three years, but in other areas too. For instance, your child is very obviously developing her own will. The Dutch have an expression for this: "I am two, so I say no!" and the English talk about the "terrible twos". There are good reasons for these common sayings.

**FORGET GENERAL RULES**

Problematic eating behaviour in children can make you feel out of pace, as often if your friend’s child really will eat anything – from gunkily-smeared toots and from heaving to bravely eating. What you should realize here is that every child is unique and your approach to food needs to be geared to the individual child. General rules do not apply and not every child can manage to eat from the same pot as the rest of the family.

**IS TASTE REALLY DISTANCE?**

Food is a basic need for people and animals. A cub panics if its mother does not have any food for it. It is the same with children. If you put something in front of children that they think is horrible, they will panic. You recognize this resistance at once – turning aside the head, pushing away the spoon, pulling faces and so on. With children it is all about responding to the signals in the right way, and especially not allowing it to become a battle.

**EATING REVOLVES AROUND**

| 1 of intuition | 2 of responsiveness | 3 of individual |

**PREFERENCE OR AVERSION**

Listen to what your child is trying to tell you – whether he does it in words or through his behaviour. You will notice that the signals that you interpreted as defiance at first are really to do with an aversion. Some children, for instance, will not eat pieces of tomato. That may be because they have an aversion to the texture of tomato. Some children get a tingling sensation in their mouths from tomato. Certain fruits, such as melon, can give the same tingling sensation. Children, just like adults, have preferences for food and aversions to certain food products, such as soft fruit or seeds in bread.

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**WHAT DO CHILDREN EAT?**

**EAT WELL DINNER BOOK**

In the next part of the Eat Well Dinner Book you will find a summary of the most important information per age group. In addition, there are recommendations for what you can do and what it is best to avoid doing, plus a description of the most common pitfalls. The point is that you should take from this book the things that you yourself find useful.
Eating and drinking before the first birthday

Extra sensitive to stimuli

Children go through several phases in the development of their eating and drinking in the first year. These phases are characterised by the acquisition of new techniques and flavours, for example, moving on from breast or bottle to spoon and from liquid food to solid food. Most children progress through these different phases without difficulty. Some children are more sensitive to stimuli in their mouths and find a new flavour a more extreme experience. Children like this need a lot more time to get used to new flavours and methods of eating. Each child responds to change in his own way.

Your baby and a new flavour

There are parents who find it difficult to adopt new skills, such as moving on from the breast to bottle feeding or spoon-feeding. Always give your baby plenty of time to get used to something new. It is important not to force feed and to be flexible about the times when you introduce new foods. You may have to experiment a bit and your baby may need to accept new flavours without noticing. Stick to the same flavour for a week or two before trying a new one.

Step 1: On the lip

Over the age of seven months, use your own baby’s mouth to feed him first off your finger and only later with the spoon. Forcefeeding certainly will not help and do not let yourself be over-influenced by the advice of grandparents or your friends, you know your own child best.

Step 2: Distract your baby

Sometimes, when you first try spoon-feeding it is a good idea to distract your baby with a brightly coloured toy which has light effects or makes noises. Then your baby will gain the experience of new flavours without noticing. Stick to the same flavour for a week or two before trying a new one.

Step 3: Be patient and keep it up

Modern parents tend to make allowances for their children’s individual taste preferences while they are still too young, sometimes even as young as seven months old. If you try too many different flavours too soon, your baby will not notice which one he prefers. He is developing his own preferences and tastes, and being patient and persistent will help your baby to accept new flavours.

Step 4: Take it gently

Don’t panic if your baby really resists your first attempts to introduce a new flavour. Simply start going through the steps again. Let him try it off your finger and only later with the spoon, forcing certainly will not help. And do not let yourself be over-influenced by the advice of grandparents or your friends, you know your own child best.

Step 5: The best time to try new food

Children like new foods as follows: smear a little fruit or vegetable purée on his or her lip with your finger and, at the same time, mime and make lip-smacking noises. Once this has gone well a few times, you can move on to the spoon.

Step-by-step approach to teaching your child to try new food

1. Smaer food with a new flavour on the lirp.
2. Distrtact your child from the new flavour with a brightly coloured toy.
3. Be patient and keep it up, so that your child can easily get used to it.

Step 1: On the lip

Don’t give your baby too many new foods all at once. Start with one new food at a time, and give him about five to seven minutes to get used to it before introducing something else. When your baby is one year old, you can let him have about three new foods at a time. Give the older child a variety of tastes and textures. Give your older child choices, and let him try to eat by himself. This makes him more independent.

Step 2: Distract your baby

If you are planning to go back to work in a couple of weeks, use your maternity leave to gradually get your baby used to a combination of breast and bottle.

Step 3: Be patient and keep it up

If your baby is having difficulty accepting the first new flavours, try this step-by-step approach.

Step 4: Take it gently

Don’t panic if your baby really resists your first attempts to introduce a new flavour. Simply start going through the steps again. Let him try it off your finger and only later with the spoon, forcing certainly will not help. And do not let yourself be over-influenced by the advice of grandparents or your friends, you know your own child best.

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Let your baby get used to new flavours as soon as possible; he tends to gain from it later on.

Eating and drinking between ages one and two

No rules at mealtimes

A lot changes for a child between his first and second birthday. He is already sitting in a high chair and is developing his own will. This behavioural change can sometimes throw the eating routine. In other words: new rules at mealtimes.

What is good for your child?

Be aware that broadening tastes and developing new skills is a very individual process. No child is the same in this respect—not even within the same family. Children all pass at their own pace, have their own preferences, and have their own rhythm of certain flavours and ways of eating. One child, for instance, really Fed of his bottle, while another cannot wait to start eating cereal from a spoon. It is not that one method of feeding is better than the other. What is important is that the child is thriving on it.

Own will

It is a good idea to introduce as many flavours as possible before the first birthday. Research has shown that children have few problems accepting different flavours in the first year of life. After that, you also have to deal with behavioural factors, the most familiar of which is the child’s own will, which can play havoc with what should be an easy introduction to a new flavour. Your child may suddenly start refusing things he has been eating up until then.

Main meal times

Once your child is over the age of one year, you can get into a daily routine of regular meals and drinks. Simply put, there are three main meals: breakfast, lunch and dinner. You can be as free as you like concerning coffee, aperitifs and before-dinner drinks. It is best to keep the main meal moderate. That will give a naturally picky child some of its security. It is true that children like quick-freezing, it is one way to avoid a battle over the main meals. Of course, you can make something different for yourself. At snack times, on the other hand, you can let your child experiment to his heart’s content.

Meal and snack times

Breakfast

Coffee®

Lunch

Liquor®

Snack drinks®

Dinner

*Of course, you don’t give your child coffee (or tea) before the age of three to four. But you can offer him tea from the time when you start something. That is the age when the child is neither too young nor too old to drink it. If you introduce coffee, it is best not to do it in one go— it is certainly bad news for your child. What you need to do is to introduce the beverage bit by bit.
You can use Mimi the food fairy’s taste-something-new plate at snack times (between ages one and two)?

How do you teach them to try new food? How do you deal with that?

Next day she has no appetite at all for her favourite food. All of a sudden the toddler refuses to eat.

It is not surprising that parents are sometimes at a complete loss when their toddler refuses to eat. One day your child is eating with relish and the next day she has no appetite at all for her favourite food. All of a sudden the food she likes best becomes the one she won’t eat any more, even if you encourage her or try to activate her with a song or say that she should eat it because it’s good for her.

It’s her age…

This is very little you can do about this arbitrary wilfulness. What you can do is to make allowances for your child’s individual preferences at mealtimes. Remember that you, as an adult, also like certain dishes more than others. If your child refuses to eat something, give her ten minutes to change her mind. If she continues to refuse, then ask, “Have you finished?” If she says “yes”, then take the plate away but do not give her anything else.

MEALS ARE A TIME OF THE DAY WHEN THE FAMILY COMES TOGETHER

Eating together is sharing. Meals are a time of the day when the family comes together. Focus on this togetherness by creating a good atmosphere at the table. The youngsters children experience this, the better. The time will come soon enough when they have to eat separately from the family because of school or sporting commitments or because they have gone to play with a friend. Children can also experience eating with others at the table, where they will eat at the table with other children. It is also important to have regular mealtimes. We cannot overemphasise the importance of eating together. The social factor is extremely important. In addition to eating together, you can also share feelings, emotions and experiences of the day with each other during the meal.
Eating and drinking between the ages of two and three

Between the second and third birthday very different issues suddenly come into play. Your child will grow, more independent and more articulate. Arguments at the table about what he does and does not want to eat become more and more frequent. Anticipate these arguments and establish a number of basic rules for your family. After a while, everyone will know the rules and then you can simply refer to them briefly and clearly. Once again, do not invite battles at the table.

Some children are extremely fussy eaters, that's just the way it is.

**EXAMPLES OF BASIC RULES**

**NO BATTLES AT THE TABLE**

- Do not put a huge plate of food in front of them at this age, but dish up small portions as meal after meal. In a small plate, it is much easier for your child to sometimes ask for more food in the form of a second helping. So he can sometimes ask for more. Always let your child have something, but always control the amount.

- It's helpful to "not want".

- Your child has to learn to taste before she can learn to enjoy food. It is important that she does this, because at this age she is going to test foods with her tongue and/or hand to determine what will be good and not good to her. Your child has to learn to taste in such a way that she can explain to you what she likes and what she does not like.

**GIVE AND TAKE**

- Some children go through all the eating phases up to now with relative ease. But there are children of two or three who continue to be extremely picky and so become selective eaters, often to the great dismay of their parents. This is when your ability to give and take comes in. Be flexible, show give and take and be prepared to compromise; they are all ways to avoid conflicts.

- Some children are extremely hungry eaters, that's just the way it is. It's not a bad thing.

**NEW RULES DO YOU HAVE UP?**

- Do not put a huge plate of food in front of them at this age, but dish up small portions as meal after meal — preferably on a small plate. It is a big reward for your child to sometimes be the first to finish his plate. In the case of two, he sometimes asks for more food instead of always hearing “finish what’s on your plate.” If your child does not ask for more, try to give him something again.

- It’s the rule to “not want”.

- Your child has to learn to taste before she can learn to enjoy food. It is important that she does this, because at this age she is going to test foods with her tongue and/or hand to determine what will be good and not good to her. Your child has to learn to taste in such a way that she can explain to you what she likes and what she does not like.

**THE STEP-BY-STEP TASTE-SOMETHING-NEW GAME**

**THE STEP-BY-STEP TASTE-SOMETHING-NEW GAME IN BRIEF**

- You and your child fill in what she wants to learn to taste on the taste-something-new plan. Do not choose too many products at once, but choose something from each of the categories meat/fish, vegetables, bread, fruits and stews. Once your child has learned to taste these foods he or she can become a Food Prince or Food Princess. You can download a new taste-something-new plan for a younger child from the website free of charge. In MiMi the food fairy has had a special taste-something-new plate, baked magic cutlery set. This can be bought at specialist baby shops or from www.difraxshop.com. The plate and magic cutlery set are designed to attract the attention of your child. It can be used at special occasions or for something new.

**WHAT YOU DO NEED TO PLAY THE STEP-BY-STEP TASTE-SOMETHING-NEW GAME?**

- TASTE-SOMETHING-NEW PLAN WITH STICKERS (SUPPLIED SEPARATELY WITH THE BOOK)
- MAGIC CUTLERY SET
- MAGIC TOADSTOOL WITH REWARD STARS
- PLACE MAT

Below is the second birthday very different issues suddenly come into play. Your child will grow, more independent and more articulate. Arguments at the table about what he does and does not want to eat become more and more frequent. Anticipate these arguments and establish a number of basic rules for your family. After a while, everyone will know the rules and then you can simply refer to them briefly and clearly. Once again, do not invite battles at the table.

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- It’s the rule to “not want”.

- Your child has to learn to taste before she can learn to enjoy food. It is important that she does this, because at this age she is going to test foods with her tongue and/or hand to determine what will be good and not good to her. Your child has to learn to taste in such a way that she can explain to you what she likes and what she does not like.

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- PLACE MAT
So let her try a tiny speck of vegetable first. Once she has licked that, then comes a speck of potato and after that a speck of meat. Only then does she get the reward star. Make an agreement with your child about what she is going to try. Take the piece of apple out and wipe your mouth with a serviette. You have earned the fourth reward star. We’ll put that on the place mat.

Step 4
Put the speck of apple on your tongue and count to ten with your mouth closed. Take the piece of apple out and wipe your mouth with a serviette. You have earned the fourth reward star. We’ll put that on the place mat.

Step 5
Put the speck of apple in your mouth and count to five. Chew three times and wash it down with a drink of water. Fantastic! You have earned the fifth and last star for your place mat. Now look in the bottom of the magic tradition and see what your surprise message from mummy and daddy says. Mmh, the food fairly thinks you are a real star, and so do mummy and daddy. There is also a sticker in the magic tradition that you can stick on your taste-something-new plate! You’ve already done one of the three lessons now, and so you deserve one of the three stickers for your taste-something-new plate!

That was the first tasting lesson!

Altogether this will take about ten minutes. Choose a set time of the day, when your child is well rested and open to trying, so that you don’t have to rush. Try to make the lesson fun. If your child already dares to hold a speck of food in her mouth, then you can go straight to the second tasting lesson. In that case do lesson three twice, so that she has tasted the food five times and has still earned 1 stickers. Afterwards, put the reward stars back on the magic tradition ready for the next tasting lesson.

Before the next tasting lesson
Switch the speck of apple for a piece of apple. Think carefully about what your child can manage. For one child a piece of apple the size of a pea will be big enough, while another child will be ready for a piece the size of a Brussels sprout. Just do not make it too big. By growing the star precisely to what your child can cope with you will keep the learning process fun. Put the surprise message and sticker in the base of the magic tradition and put the reward stars on top. Always put the piece of apple your child is to try on the taste-something-new plate beforehand and repeat the last step of the previous tasting lesson before you start the new tasting lesson.

The second tasting lesson
Step 1
Put the piece of apple in your mouth.
Chew it three times.
Swallow, gone, with a drink of water.
Well done. You have earned the first reward star. We’ll put that on the place mat.

Step 2
Put the piece of apple in your mouth.
Chew it three times.
Swallow, gone.
Then have a drink of water.
Well done. You have earned the second reward star. We’ll put that on the place mat.

Step 3
Put the piece of apple in your mouth.
Are you ready to begin? Go!
Chew it so fast that it goes down all at once.
Then have a drink of water.
Well done. You have earned the third reward star.

Step 4
Put the piece of apple in your mouth.
Are you ready to begin? Go!
I’ll give you five minutes to eat all three.
Swallow the times you can have a drink of water after each piece. Well done. You have earned the fourth reward star. We’ll put that on the place mat.

Step 5
Now you are going to eat a slightly bigger piece of apple three times.
Are you ready to begin? Go!
I’ll give you five minutes to eat all three.
Swallow the times.
Chew it so fast that it goes all down at once.
Then have a drink of water.
Well done. You have earned the fifth reward star.
We’ll put that on the place mat.

You’ll find another sticker in the magic tradition for managing to do this tasting lesson. Congratulations, you have finished the second tasting lesson! Stick your sticker on your taste-something-new plan and then be quick and look at your surprise message.

Watch your child
Observe your child carefully at every step to see if she can manage it. If she shows signs of fear just go back a step or distract her with a bright toy. That’s the way to reduce the risk of rejection and it’s the best way to motivate and encourage her. Sometimes it is necessary to use water longer to help with swallowing the food. Don’t make a problem out of this. Patience is very important at this stage.

Sticking
You are actually well on the way. For children who go through the tasting lessons quickly and easily, you can move on to the next lesson. For those who are slower, keep practicing lessons 1 and 2. Your
child should decide for himself which tasting lesson he is going to start with. At the end of each tasting lesson, you put the reward star your child earned back on the magic traditional. There is one sticker to be earned for each lesson, which your child can stick on his taste-something-new plan. In total the book contains three stickers per category per tasting lesson. You decide when your child has earned a sticker and what he has to do to get it.

Now it is time for the third and final tasting lesson. This involves different steps which all have an in-built play element. So you can make it into a competition by tasting yourself with your child. You can set time limits, such as five pieces in five minutes.

The Third Tasting Lesson

STEP 1
We are going to play a game to see who can taste, chew and swallow the piece of apple first (the size of the piece is the same as in lesson two).

Get ready, go!

Very well done! You have earned the first reward star.

We'll put that on the place mat.

STEP 2

"Now we are going to cut the apple into proper segments and bite pieces off the segments."

Look! I'll show you how with these two segments.

The time starts now!

Very well done! You have earned the second reward star.

We'll put that on the place mat.

STEP 3

"Now we are going to cut the apple into proper segments and bite pieces off the segments."

Look! I'll show you how with these two segments.

The time starts now!

Well done! You have earned the third reward star.

We'll put that on the place mat.

STEP 4

"Now we are going to cut the apple into proper segments and bite pieces off the segments."

Look! I'll show you how with these two segments.

The time starts now!

Well done! You have earned the fourth reward star.

We'll put that on the place mat.

STEP 5

"The last part of the lesson is to take a bite out of a whole apple."

Look! I'll show you how with the apple.

Fantastical! You have earned the fifth and last star for your place mat.

Now look in the magic traditional and see what your surprise message says.

Mimì the food fairy thinks you are a real star, and so do mum and dad.

The last sticker from Mimìthe food fairy is in the magic traditional and you can stick it on your taste-something-new plan!

Now you have all done three tasting lessons and so you have earned three stickers for your taste-something-new plan!

So now you know... apple! You are well on the way to becoming a Food Prince or Food Princess.

The last sticker from Mimìthe food fairy is in the magic traditional and you can stick it on your taste-something-new plan!

Easy as apple pie!

Very well done! You have earned the fifth and last star for your place mat.

We'll put that on the place mat.

Very well done! You have earned the fifth and last reward star.

We'll put that on the place mat.

The time starts now!

The Tasting Lessons

1. Learn to eat very slowly
2. Learn to cut pieces
3. Eating match

How to start with a picky eater

A picky eater will investigate his food in minute detail and only pick out what he likes best. Teach your child that he has to eat the meat, potato and vegetables (or other foods on the plate) in turn, so that he does not eat one kind of food up first and leave the rest on the plate.

You can also guide a picky eater by saying how many mouthfuls he will ”should” eat from a tiny piece of meat. Always remember not to offer adult portion sizes.

REWARD YOUR CHILD WITH:

A REWARD STAR FOR EACH OF THE TASTING LESSON
A STICKER AT THE END OF EACH TASTING LESSON
A REWARD IN THE FORM OF A PRESENT OF NOT IN THE MAGIC TOADSTOOL.
THE FOOD PRINCE / FOOD PRINCESS CROWN FROM THE BOOK

If your child eats sandwiches very slowly, cut them up into smaller portions. Use a timer and set it for 1 minute per bite-sized portion. Encourage your child to eat it up and swallow it before the bell rings. "Well done, you finished that before the bell. Next hint: eat it up!"

One star for the place mat can be earned for every bite. You keep control over the whole sandwich. You give him one little piece at a time on the plate. In this way, the amount of food seems more manageable to your child.

TYPES OF EATER IN THE GAME

SLOW EATER

MUNCHY EATER

How to start with a slow eater

If your child can not learn to eat from apple, from now on, give her apple three times a week and gradually increase the amount. Take it at your child's own pace.

It is sometimes a good idea to take it slowly for a while with the amount. When your child is ready for something new, choose what

THE MAGIC TOADSTOOL

Your child gets a star if he eats up the agreed amount within the set time. Once your child has learned to eat his sandwich within a reasonable time (half an hour maximum), he gets his magic traditional with the surprise message. This approach can also be used, of course, for other meals not just sandwiches.

How to reward a slow eater

You can also reward a slow eater by putting the agreed amount in the magic toadstool. Or write a promise when that moment arrives! Of course, this should be accompanied with a great present. Hide it in the magic traditional. Or write a promise on a little note (1 x go swimming, 1 x day out) and hide that in the magic toadstool.

The food prince / food princess crown from the book can also be set time limits, such as five pieces in five minutes.

So now it is time for the third and final tasting lesson.

This involves different steps which all have an in-built play element. So you can make it into a competition by tasting yourself with your child. You can set time limits, such as five pieces in five minutes.

Very well done! You have earned the first reward star.

We'll put that on the place mat.

Very well done! You have earned the second reward star.

We'll put that on the place mat.

Very well done! You have earned the third reward star.

We'll put that on the place mat.

Very well done! You have earned the fourth reward star.

We'll put that on the place mat.

Very well done! You have earned the fifth and last reward star.

We'll put that on the place mat.

The time starts now!

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The time starts now!

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Easy as apple pie!

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The time starts now!
Dos and don’ts

What should you do and what is it best not to do at mealtimes? We have a list of practical tips for healthy eating and drinking habits for you.

DO

Let your child decide how much to eat.

DO

Push your child to eat more?

DON’T

Push your child to eat more.

DO

When he is ready for solid food, let your child experiment with a snack or a course of bread on a regular basis.

DON’T

Interfere with your child while he is experimenting with the new food.

DO

Children have something to eat on average five times a day. Let your child discover for himself what he can do with a bread crust: chew on it, suck on it or nibble it. Accept that his first attempts with solid food (bread sticks, crusts) often result in scratching. That is normal and it is good for the real motor development. Stay close by for safety reasons. Children between the ages of one and two have a strong instinct to mimic. So take a self and bite bits off. Do it casually in front of your child. Say out loud how lovely your roll is. When you are walking with your child in the pushchair, give him something to eat in his hand. By taking something yourself, your child will copy you. The things that you do not put too much emphasis on become the things they want. You need to subtly prompt your child to mimic.

DO

Offer small, manageable portions at mealtimes.

DON’T

Allow your child to play with food at the table.

DO

When you sit down to the table with your child, put a tiny dot of food on his plate. That stimulates his appetite. When that’s gone, give him another bite of the same food. In this way, he will gradually get used to the flavour. Don’t think in terms of adult portions. It is not just about the need for food at this stage, it is about the learning experience. There is nothing wrong with an eight-month-old baby who spits out his vegetables. He just has to get used to the flavours. So keep practising.

DO

Take into consideration the performance and dislikes of children over the age of eight.

DON’T

Stick to so-called “general rules”.

Some children continue to eat puréed food for a long time. Your child may have had an unpleasant experience with food that had not been puréed. She may have experienced a persistent retching response to smooth food, with more solid bits in it, such as yoghurt with bits of fruit. Your child may have developed a negative association with this kind of food. After all, there are even some adults who strongly dislike foods of this texture and this may be genetically determined. Be understanding about this. An aversion to a particular type of food begins with the acknowledgment of it by the parents. Do not say “my child will just have to learn to like it” because you think that it is one of the “general rules”. Quite the reverse – you can easily move from smooth food to chunkier smooth food to completely solid food. It is not necessary to eat that kind of messy food in order to learn to eat solid food, and so you should not try to force it. Some children are able to go straight from purée to solid foods – from baby cereal to bread and from smooth mashed potatoes, meat and vegetables served separately. In this case, you can miss out the lumpy stage altogether. Treat the yoghurt with hairy bits for what it is, and give your child smooth yoghurt and pieces of apple separately.

DO

Keep on trying.

DON’T

Let your child (of eight months old) have his own way if he does not respond positively to new flavours at right away.

DO

Repetition is very important when children are learning to get used

How to start your baby without stress

For some picky children, breakfast, as the first meal of the day, is what they have most problems with and they struggle to swallow bread or rice. In that case, you could give them muesli or cornflakes with milk or yoghurt, or porridge.

What if your child ever uses food to manipulate you? In that case, use the twenty-minute method. This means that you do whatever your child tries to use food to manipulate you with: milk or yoghurt, or porridge, what they have most problems with and they struggle to swallow.

For some picky children, breakfast, as the first meal of the day, is what they have most problems with and they struggle to swallow. How to start the day without stress (especially hot meals).

Wilfulness that a child of this age can display with regard to food is not just about the need for food at this stage, it is about the learning experience. There is nothing wrong with an eight-month-old baby who spits out his vegetables. He just has to get used to the flavours. So keep practising.

Some children continue to eat puréed food for a long time. Your child may have had an unpleasant experience with food that had not been puréed. She may have experienced a persistent retching response to smooth food, with more solid bits in it, such as yoghurt with bits of fruit. Your child may have developed a negative association with this kind of food. After all, there are even some adults who strongly dislike foods of this texture and this may be genetically determined. Be understanding about this. An aversion to a particular type of food begins with the acknowledgment of it by the parents. Do not say “my child will just have to learn to like it” because you think that it is one of the “general rules”. Quite the reverse – you can easily move from smooth food to chunkier smooth food to completely solid food. It is not necessary to eat that kind of messy food in order to learn to eat solid food, and so you should not try to force it. Some children are able to go straight from purée to solid foods – from baby cereal to bread and from smooth mashed potatoes, meat and vegetables served separately. In this case, you can miss out the lumpy stage altogether. Treat the yoghurt with hairy bits for what it is, and give your child smooth yoghurt and pieces of apple separately.

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to iron flavours. On average, a child will have to taste something at least fifteen times to learn to enjoy something new. Even if the child is not keen or perhaps put up strong resistance, you should try again another time and keep up trying. You must not give your child his own way on this. One thing that can help when introducing new flav- ours is to distract your baby with bright toys with lights and sound effects. Thanks to these distraction techniques, the baby experiences the new flavours unconsciously. A child of three or older can take on the stop-start taste—something new, and so the distraction techniques are no longer needed for these older children.

Do

Take a step-by-step approach with each child.

Don’t

Try all children the same.

Some

children naturally enjoy their food more than others. Some children are more sensitive to new flavours. These are usually alert children. They experience new flavours as being more extreme. Once they have got used to a variety of flavours, their parents report that they mainly go for spicy food. They prefer strong flavours like olives, prawns, herbing and Chinese and Indian food. These children are less interested in food with a bland flavour, such as cauliflower or carrots. Parents often think that children like bland flavours. But that is not true. Try stir-frying cauliflower with some spices and see how your child reacts to it.

Do

Agree on some basic family rules for mealtimes.

Don’t

Negotiate the rules every day.

The most common pitfalls

No matter how hard you try to use a parent, assume or later you will walk into a pitfall with your eyes wide open. A pitfall is a problem where you choose exactly the wrong solution. That’s why we have summarised the most common pitfalls for you here.

MY CHILD DOES NOT EAT NORMALLY…

A child who loves sandwiches but is less keen on his dinners is still well within the realms of what is normal. It only becomes a problem if the child really will only eat bread. If it has got that bad and he “re- ally will only eat bread…” you need to address the problem. Use the ‘tasting lessons in this book. Give your child other foods, encourage him, and compliment him if he wants to try something new.

MY CHILD ONLY WANTS TO EAT FROM THOSE LITTLE PACKS...

Individualism reigns supreme in our society. And the food industry has been quick to take advantage of this with a large number of products in mini packs mini desserts, fruit sauce packets, and individually packed these snacks, to name just a few examples. All those small snacks and different brands of ready-to-serve jars can get children into the habit of only eating snacks and treats. The more normal (i.e. not associated with a particular brand) the constituents of a meal, the easier it will be for your child to deal with everyday meals. This is especially true if she sometimes goes to eat at grandma and grandad’s where they do not have all these newfangled food products, of course.

MY CHILD MAKES EVERY MEAL INTO A DRAMA…

What do you do if your child has an aversion to commonplace foods? No parent can remain unmoved if their baby or toddler starts screaming his heart out as soon as he sees the bib or the spoon. You want your child to eat, and your obviously does not want to. Don’t get drawn into this battle. Start with offering food on your finger instead of a spoon, and you usually do not need to resort to distraction techniques (see the chapter on “Eating and drinking between ages one and two”). Sometimes an episode of this can cause a sudden aversion. Your child may take a dislike to his meal because he was violently sick when eating a hot dinner. A negative experience is then associated with hot food. Try to gradually get him to start eating it again. If he does not work, seek professional help.

MY CHILD HAS THESE FOOD FADS [BETWEEN THE AGE OF TWO AND THREE]. First, he wouldn’t eat anything but peanut butter, and now he won’t touch it anymore. Periods of changing likes and dislikes are very normal in children. Think of it as a wave. The preference comes and goes. If your child is mad on peanut butter for a while and then later absolutely refuses to eat it for a long time, then… Or, you need to be flexible in the way you deal with this. Don’t make an issue out of it.

MY CHILD ONLY EATS FOUR KINDS OF VEGETABLES “In what way” we are tempted to say. An abundance of flavours and consistencies gives some children a sense of insecurity. They do not know what they will be faced with next. Every day they have to wait and see what culinary wonders their parents have dreamed up today. Eating the same food as the rest of the family is synonymous nowadays with eating something different every day. That is nice for the parents, but terrifying for the child. Children like what they know, that’s just the way they are. Giving them something different or eat every day means that they do not have enough time to get used to a particular flavour. Having three or four varieties is not bad at all. What would you prefer? A child who can eat the food he is familiar with and enjoys it? Or a child who can only get to the table after a great struggle and who sits there in tears reluctantly looking at what he has to eat in a strange meal?

MY CHILD WANTS TO EAT SWEETS ALL DAY LONG...

The chances are that when you were a child the sweet tin only came out at the weekend. If you try to eradicate that custom to your own family today, you will soon be in for a disappointment. Because children visit other families where having sweets and
When both parents work they often find that, after picking up the children, they still have to think what to have for dinner and what to do about children unsettled. This is not convenient. Apart from the fact that a child of one or two years should ideally eat his evening meal around 5 o’clock, eating late is often rushed and stressful. At about 5 o’clock a young child can still summon up sufficient attention for the meal, and so eat better. Furthermore, he will not have to go to bed on a full stomach.

**Planning and Organisation**

Anticipation is the key word. Plan your meals [working] week ahead and do the bulk of your food shopping once a week. You can pick up fresh vegetables in between at your local convenience store. But be recommended.

**WHAT DO YOU PUT ON THE TABLE?**

Do you find an easier way to prepare something tasty and original on the table every day? Well that’s not necessary at all. You could cook for two days on alternate days. An average child will eat four or five different dishes and as a parent you should be content with that. For example, one pasta meal, three meals based around vegetables with meat or fish, and one meat meal. You can eat a variety of staples with the vegetables, such as rice, pasta or potatoes. Be creative and flexible — try to think up variations that are healthy and tasty. Does your child like carrots? Then think up a tasty dish with carrots that you can repeat every four or five days, possibly with minor adaptations. The child recognises carrots, likes it and eats with relish. When it comes to fruit, choose mainly apples, pears, bananas, berries and chips. Do you feel guilty about this kind of convenience food? That is not necessary at all — as long as you do not confine yourself to ready-to-eat products. With pizzas and puddings that you make yourself, you can think up healthy combinations with fresh vegetables, meat, fish, vegetarian products or eggs.

**Busy families**

**WHAT DO YOU PUT ON THE TABLE?**

**TEN TOP TIPS**

TIP 1 Every child goes through the eating phases in his own unique way.

TIP 2 Stick to the three basic concepts (Intuition, Responsive-ness, Individual).

TIP 3 Learn to recognise your child’s preferences for certain foods and drinks and take them into account when preparing meals.

TIP 4 Use distraction techniques with very young children.

TIP 5 Be patient (perseverance in the short term pays dividends in the long term).

TIP 6 Keep trying: taste can be learned.

TIP 7 Offer juice or milky drinks at set times of the day (don’t let your child go around with a bottle of cap or cup of juice all day long).

TIP 8 When introducing new flavours and methods of eating, choose from staples with the vegetables, such as rice, pasta or potato.

TIP 9 Take it in small steps. Start with a tiny speck of a new flavour. Do not aim for too much variety — that makes young children unsettled.

TIP 10 Avoid battles at the table and find creative ways around them.

**A GOOD EXAMPLE LEADS TO GOOD HABITS**

Even though you are really too tired to cook sometimes or feel unenthusiastic, the way you approach food now, in the early years, really is important, simply because children love to copy. That is why it is important that eating is associated with a pleasant atmosphere and socially rewarding behaviour. Do not let your children get into the habit of snacking. If you let them have food and drink all day long without having set meals, they will be unlikely to eat proper meals when they leave home and are looking after themselves. They won’t look very often and they will be more likely to eat fast food on the street or have a ready meal on their lap at home. Let children help you with preparing food from a young age. Take time for proper meals. That teaches children to appreciate food. Eating is a social occasion to be enjoyed together in a relaxed atmosphere and at the table — not on the sofa in front of the TV.
It is important that a child gets up in time to have a proper breakfast. One way to achieve this may be to have the evening meal a bit earlier. The children could eat with one parent in advance, so that they can get to bed in good time. You and your partner could take turns, of course, depending on your work schedules.

Eating with the Whole Day
Breakfast is the first meal of the day. Breakfast often gets skipped, because everyone is busy and in a hurry to get to school and work on time. That’s a pity, because a good breakfast gives you energy for the rest of the day. Does your child find it difficult to polish off a_hearty breakfast in the morning? Think about each child’s individual preferences. Not all children can eat the same amount. One solution is to provide a light breakfast and give your child a substantial morning snack. Another solution is to give a thick yoghurt with muesli or cereal; he doesn’t like eating bread or toast in the morning. If your child does like bread but always makes a fuss about what you put on it, come to an agreement beforehand about what he can choose from.

Nowadays there are many options for adding flavour, such as herbs, ketchup or gravy. After all, these are children who find vegetables easier to accept if you add some form of flavouring. One way to do this is to stir the vegetables with spices.

Let your child dip bread into the soup to get used to the taste. In the last century it was common practice in the Netherlands to pour apple sauce over everything. Parents hoped that by doing this they would get their children to acquire a taste for green beans, peas, carrots and cauliflower. Apple sauce was the lubricant that helped the food go down. Nowadays there are many options for adding flavour, such as herbs, ketchup or gravy. After all, these are children who find vegetables easier to accept if you add

Food with (extra) flavour

Before you opened this book, you probably had a lot of doubts and worries about your child’s eating habits. We hope that this information has guided you to a new, more positive perspective on your “picky eaters.” In fact, among healthy young children there are no “poor eaters”, only selective eaters.

It is up to parents to learn to recognize their children’s preferences and sensitivities when it comes to food, to recognize that these come and go and to respond to them sensitively. What’s more, for a child it is not by definition unhealthy to be a selective eater. Naturally, as a parent, you want to help your child to expand his repertoire of flavours and ways of eating. You are in an ideal position to help your child do this. Observe your child, acknowledge the way he is and then try to find the best way to get him to experience meals as pleasant and enjoyable. Remember that every child is unique and the inform­ation offered in this book is only a guideline and not compulsory. You know your child best!

And Finally

Monique Thomas-van Duijts
Eating counsellor

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Also published in this series is the "Giving up your Booster Bites" with Sue Do the Booster Free, to help you wean your child off the soother from the age of three years.

To download this free of charge, visit www.Grrrr.com

www.difrax.com
A child has a lot to learn in the first few years. He has to learn to sit, stand and walk, but also to learn to eat and drink. With some children this all comes naturally, for others it comes less naturally. This book offers you support, so that learning to eat and learning to enjoy food can be a pleasant experience and a journey of discovery for your child!

The Eat Well Dinner Book contains fun stories for reading aloud, activities, a taste-something-new plan, reward stickers and one more lovely surprise! Learning to eat and learning to enjoy food is made fun with the help of the adventures of Kate and Kevin and with tips from MiMi the food fairy!

Monique Thomas-Holtus shares her experiences and expertise as an eating counsellor in the section for parents which she wrote. The fairy story part of the book blends seamlessly with Monique’s advice. The whole plan is made complete with the special magic dinner set (obtainable from www.difraxshop.com and from specialist baby shops), so that eating really does become:

Take a bite – swallow – gone!

Idea and text: Vivienne van Eijkelenborg
Text: Monique Thomas-Holtus
Illustrations and text: Inge Nouws

Suitable for children from the age of three with some help from their parents.